

SWOT ANALYSIS

Town of
Amherst
MA

SWOT ANALYSIS

	HELPFUL	HARMFUL
INTERNAL	Strengths	Weaknesses
EXTERNAL	Opportunities	Threats

Strengths

Weaknesses

Threats

Opportunities

Developing the SWOT:

Selected Plans/Reports 2003-17

- RKG Housing Market Study (2015)
- Housing Production Plan (2013)
- Amherst BID - Student Trends Analysis (2016)
- U3 Advisors Report (2014)
- Amherst Master Plan (2010)
- Amherst Preservation Plan (2005)
- Amherst Open Space and Recreation Plan (Draft, 2003)
- Zoning Bylaw
- Permitting Process



Developing the SWOT:

Recent / Current Development Projects



Developing the SWOT:

Interviews with Key Stakeholders



- Local realtors and developers
- Town officials and staff

- Business Improvement District (BID)
- Cultural sites and museums
- UMass representatives



SWOT CATEGORIES

- **General Town-wide Analysis**
- **Tourism & Entertainment**
- **Business & Entrepreneurship**

Town of Amherst

Strengths

- Home of UMass flagship campus and two highly regarded colleges
- Vibrant, diverse residents, students and faculty of all ages
- Many cultural attractions
- Productive farmland
- Recreational open space
- Appealing, thriving, historic New England town center in the Connecticut River Valley



Town of Amherst

Strengths, cont'd

- University and colleges are major employers
- Active civic involvement



- Town residents support some types of new development:
 - Amherst Cinema
 - New music venue
 - Restaurants
 - Clean energy/High-tech incubator
 - Agriculture-based business and services
 - Tourism

Town of Amherst

Weaknesses

and

Threats

- Somewhat isolated from region
- Recommended zoning bylaw updates and overhaul not undertaken
- Permitting process not streamlined

- Competition from Boston area for students and start-ups
- Risk of losing population and businesses
- Demographic trends and changes in higher education could result in lower student enrollments
- Potential loss of historic character

Town of Amherst

Opportunities

- New Town Council form of government
- Expand cultural tourism
- High-tech spinoffs from University
- New retail shops
- Investigate potential:
 - More educational support services?
 - Agricultural products?
 - Other business clusters/industries?

“Carefully balance historic character of Town with the need to consider economic development”

-Amherst Master Plan, 2010

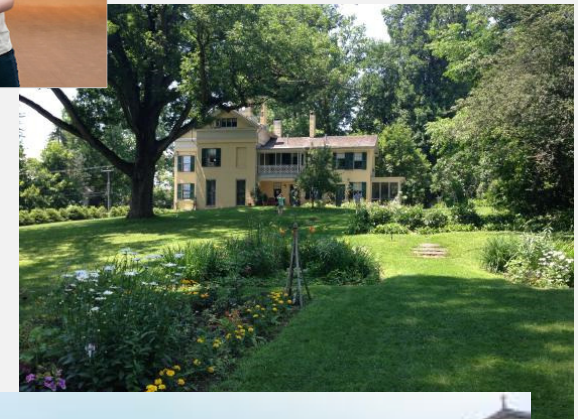




TOURISM AND ENTERTAINMENT

Tourism and Entertainment: *Strengths*

- Popular destination – a range of cultural, historic and recreational attractions
- Estimated 305,000 visitors/year, including Mullins Center & Fine Arts Center
- Includes est. 75,000 to non-UMass attractions in Amherst
- Dining destination (\$8 m. surplus)



Tourism and Entertainment:

Strengths, cont'd

- Summer events on campuses:

- Conferences incl. Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) conference
- Ko Festival of Performance

- Local events:

- Taste of Amherst
- Block Party
- Restaurant Week
- And more...

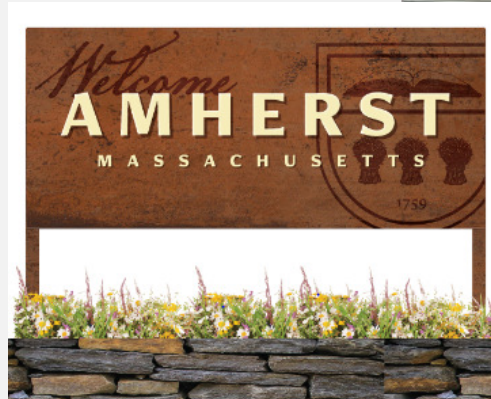


- 80 miles of hiking trails; Mt. Holyoke Range State Park
- Art-house cinema
- Arts Night Plus

Tourism and Entertainment:

Strengths, cont'd

- ValleyBike bikeshare this spring
- Wayfinding signs forthcoming
- BID working towards music venue with local developers



Tourism and Entertainment:

Strengths, cont'd

- 12 Inns and traditional B&Bs plus 70+ Airbnbs
- 116 rooms - Hotel UMass
- 80 Restaurants and Drinking Establishments
- Marketing:
 - Hampshire County Regional Tourism Council website: www.visithampshirecounty.com
 - www.Museums10.org
 - Five Colleges portal: www.fivecolleges.edu

Tourism and Entertainment: *Weaknesses*

- Competition from UMass - parking sites remote from town center
- Insufficient marketing budgets for chamber, BID, Hampshire Regional Tourism Council
- Lack of evening activities downtown (other than restaurants)
- Distance: 17-20 minutes from I-91 exits; 25-30 min. from Northampton and Greenfield; 45 min. from Springfield
- Perception of lack of parking



Tourism and Entertainment: *Threats*

- Ongoing and increased competition from UMass and Northampton
- Increased traffic congestion on Route 9 in Hadley
- Loss of historic character



Tourism and Entertainment: *Opportunities*



- Potential downtown performance venue

- Increased and more coordinated marketing:
 - Among local attractions
 - University & downtown partnerships (example: Fine Arts Center – FAC - dining card)



**Feedback
and Questions
Welcome!**



BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Business and Entrepreneurship: *Strengths*

TALENT

- Engaged local residents
- Graduating students – educated workforce
- Prominent academics in variety of disciplines



MARKET DEMAND

- Students
- Upper-income households
- Diverse visitors

B&E:

Strengths, p.2

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Power of ***COLLABORATION***



- Business Improvement District (BID)
- Economic Development Director position
- Town permits administrator role
- AmherstWorks (Workbar network)
- UMass - commercialization and spinoffs

B&E:

Strengths, p.3

ATTRACTIONS/AMENITIES

- Compact, walkable town center
- Dining destination
- Variety of retail shops (few vacancies)
- Downtown Visitors Center
- Farmers' market
- Independent bookstores
- Inns and B&Bs
- Cultural, historic, and recreational attractions



B&E:

Strengths, p.4

NEW BUSINESS

- Local developers collaborate
- UMass - incentive for lg. business satellite offices
e.g. MassMutual Data Labs – jobs, foot traffic, visibility
- New medical marijuana business
- ALKU – customized enterprise software
- Two new restaurants



Business and Entrepreneurship: *Weaknesses*



LACK OF BUSINESS SUPPORT/PROMOTION

- No local small business support organization
- Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce – currently without staff
- Very little local venture capital
- Kayon Accelerator did not succeed

Business and Entrepreneurship: *Weaknesses, p.2*

OBSTACLES TO DEVELOPMENT

- Lack of existing vacant land that is commercially zoned
- Lack of office or lab space, esp. 5K+ square feet
- High cost of land
- High property taxes
- Development review & permitting process can be complex
- Complex downtown zoning provisions (multiple zones and overlays); few research park zones



Business and Entrepreneurship:

Weaknesses, p.3

DETERRENTS TO VISITORS

- Access & transportation to/from Amherst



- Parking concerns
- Students: *"don't feel welcome"*

RETAIL LEAKAGE just outside town



Business and Entrepreneurship: *Threats*

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

- Increased development along Route 9 west – traffic & retail leakage
- Need for long-term leases on new office or lab space
- Unclear future of lodging regulations
- Zoning restrictions could jeopardize good projects
- Demand for parking



Business and Entrepreneurship: *Opportunities, p.1*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

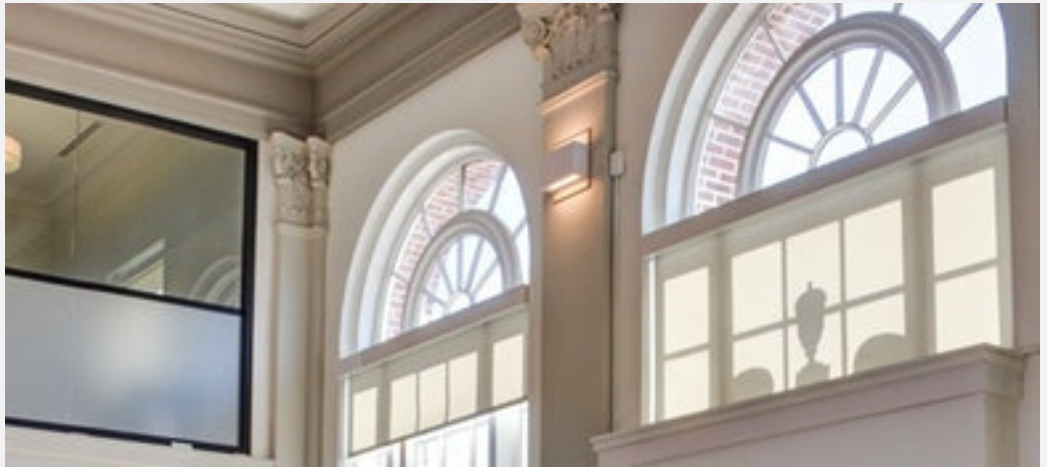
- Revisit Master Plan and zoning regs
- Redevelop/infill existing commercial centers
- Downtown fire station
- Encourage living and working near Amherst
- Regional hi-tech incubator–revenue-sharing?



Business and Entrepreneurship: *Opportunities, p.2*

BUSINESS SUPPORT

- Amherst Works - Workbar network
- Wayfinding amenities
- Tap local venture capitalists
- Regional resources - VVM, Alchemy Fund, Common Capital etc.



- BID
 - Performance venue
 - Encourage students to patronize shops/restaurants
 - Streetscape improvements

Business and Entrepreneurship: *Opportunities, p.3*

UMASS: Tremendous Potential



- Commercialization and Spinoffs
- Graduates want to live and work here
- Lg. business satellite offices
- High-tech incubator

Business and Entrepreneurship: *Opportunities, p.4*

- **UMass Amherst:**
 - Technology Transfer Office → spinoffs
 - Berthiaume Center for Entrepreneurship
 - Institute for Applied Life Sciences
 - Isenberg/IALS Innovation Fellows Program
 - IALS “Collaboratories” and 30 Core facilities
 - UMass Innovation Challenge competition
 - Isenberg Consulting Clubs
 - Maroon Venture Partners Fund



Business and Entrepreneurship: *Opportunities, p.5*

OTHER NEW BUSINESS

- Medical marijuana- health impacts research
- Dining + Evening Activities
- New retail demand from new housing projects
- Up to 5-6 new stores
- Well-educated, upper income households- “upscale” retail market opportunity
- Service-oriented firms out of UMass



So, here we are.....



**Feedback
and Questions
Welcome!**

